

**BUILDING ORGANIZATIONAL EQUITY FOR COMMUNITY RISK
REDUCTION THROUGH COLLABORATION AND THE INTEREST BASED
PROCESS**

LEADING COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION

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ABSTRACT

In 1998 the City of Alameda Fire Department (AFD) adopted the Interest Based Negotiations Process (IBN) and established a Joint Labor Management Team to provide a means of collaboration to make decisions on fire department issues and programs. The IBN process fostered collaboration and brought the parties together to settle on a long-term labor contract.

The problem was that the AFD has never evaluated the Collaboration/IBN process and its effect on building organizational equity towards improving community risk reduction. The purpose of this research project was to determine whether or not to continue using the Interest Based Process (IBN) and collaboration in the Alameda Fire Department and/or to identify needed improvements to the process.

The research undertaken for this project included various conclusions and opinions from both private and public sector experts and professionals. Evaluative research methods were employed as a means to answer the four following questions:

- 1.) What is Collaboration/IBN and how can it build organizational equity?
- 2.) What criteria should be used to evaluate our use of Collaboration/IBN and its effect on organizational equity?
- 3.) Has the Interest Based/Collaborative process built organizational equity in the Alameda Fire Department?
- 4.) Are changes or improvements needed for the Alameda Fire Department Interest Based / Collaborative Process?

Research literature collection began with a literature review at the National Fire Academy's Learning Resource Center (LRC). Evaluative research was utilized given the

identified purpose of evaluating the IBN / Collaborative process and the effect that it has had on organizational equity in the AFD. A survey of all AFD members was conducted to evaluate the organizational equity.

Results clearly established that the IBN/Collaborative process is successful in the City of Alameda Fire Department and has built organizational equity. The majority of survey respondents agree that the criteria for successful Collaboration and criteria indicating organizational equity are present in Alameda.

The survey results also indicated that there were areas in which the IBN/Collaborative process can be improved. The recommendation is to continue with the process but concentrate on those areas needing improvement in the general areas of communication, team building, strategic planning and time management. They should be the subjects of future training updates and agenda items for the FLMT to consider.

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INTRODUCTION

The Leading Community Risk Reduction (LCRR) course delivered at the National Fire Academy teaches students that often times Executive Fire Officers (EFO) must lead a change in the organizational culture towards support of community risk reduction initiatives. Community risk reduction initiatives can be any program that reduces any type of risk present in the community such as fire, flood, sudden cardiac death or juvenile fire setting. One of the best ways to encourage change and support is by building organizational equity.

Organizational equity is defined as “The positive potential for support of the organization’s leadership due to the day-to-day actions of the EFO” (LCRR, Student Manual, 2004). “Organizational equity is built when the EFO works to meet the needs of the men and women of the organization. When those needs are met a deposit is made in an organizational “savings account,” an account from which withdrawals may be made in the future for such initiatives as organizational change” (LCRR, Student Manual, 2004).

Organizational equity has also been defined as a reference to the extent to which employees are treated with justice at their workplace. Organizational equity involves a procedural component and a relational component. The former indicates whether decision-making procedures include input from affected parties, are consistently applied, suppress bias, are accurate, are correctable and are ethical. The latter element refers to treating individuals with politeness and consideration by supervisors (Kivmaki, et al, 2003)

Interest Based Negotiations and Collaboration are methods for meeting the needs of the men and women of the organization. The aim of these methods is to encourage

involvement, build trust and empower the members of the organization. IBN is an inquiry based approach to problem solving and negotiations and is designed to bring problem solvers on both sides of an issue together in a relationship that encourages cooperation instead of competition (Glaser, 1998) Collaboration is the act of working together. Collaboration is more than simply sharing knowledge and information and more than a relationship that helps each party achieve its own goals. The purpose of collaboration is to create a shared vision and joint strategies to address concerns that go beyond the purview of any particular party (Griffiths, 2004). Since 1998 the AFD has been utilizing the IBN process and Collaboration to bring Labor and Management together to settle labor agreements, set policy and to make decisions on just about any issue or program including risk reduction programs.

The problem is that the City of Alameda Fire Department had never evaluated the process nor had they evaluated the success IBN/Collaboration may be having towards building organizational equity. The individual members of the AFD may have their own personal opinions about the value and effectiveness of the IBN process, but no one has evaluated the success of the process and its effect on organizational equity based on widely accepted criteria established by subject matter experts. The purpose of this research project was to complete that evaluation and to develop suggested changes or improvements if the evaluation demonstrates a need. Evaluative research methodology was used to answer the following questions:

- 1.) What is Collaboration/IBN and how can it build organizational equity?
- 2.) What criteria should be used to evaluate our use of Collaboration/IBN and its effect on organizational equity?

- 3.) Has the Interest Based/Collaborative process built organizational equity in the Alameda Fire Department?
- 4.) Are changes or improvements needed for the Alameda Fire Department Interest Based / Collaborative Process?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The City of Alameda, California is located in the San Francisco Bay Area, adjacent to the City of Oakland and across the bay from San Francisco. The City of Alameda covers an area of about 12 square miles and is located within the County of Alameda. The total resident population of approximately 79,800 citizens live in 31,413 occupied dwellings.

The Alameda Fire Department has a total staff of 110 sworn members. Emergency services are provided with line personnel assigned to a standard three platoon system with three person fire companies and two firefighter/paramedics on the ambulance transport vehicles. Minimum daily line staffing is 28 full time paid personnel. Five engine companies, two truck companies, three ambulance units and one division chief make up the daily response contingent. The Alameda Fire Department provides a full range of services including: Fire response, emergency medical services, advanced life support transport, fire boat, water rescue and confined space rescue.

In 2003, the Fire Department responded to 5,889 requests for help from the public. The majority (approximately 70%) of these calls were to provide emergency medical service.

The labor relations problems began back on December 31, 1994 when the labor contract between The City of Alameda and The International Association of Firefighters, Local #689 expired. The parties commenced negotiations for a new contract and held a number of meet and confer sessions. Traditional negotiations procedures were employed and the results were not productive. The Union declared an impasse on October 19, 1995. Mediation sessions failed to resolve the impasse and eventually the dispute concerning financial benefits was submitted to the binding arbitration process pursuant to the Alameda City Charter.

The Arbitration commenced on October 23, 1996. A disagreement quickly ensued over which issues were arbitrable according to the City Charter. The city representatives walked out of the arbitration hearings and this move prompted the Union to petition the Alameda County Superior Court for an order compelling arbitration.

A change in local politics brought a new city council and management team to the City of Alameda. The new city manager was a strong believer of the IBN process. The new manager proposed that all the AFD Managers and the complete Executive Board of the Union Local receive training in IBN.

Considerable effort was made to set realistic expectations about what could be achieved, given the investment of both time and money in this dispute. Even with realistic expectations of what could be achieved, though, both parties made a conscious decision to assume the inherent risks of the rebuilding process.

The training was completed, and the process of solution identification began. Despite the fact that a decision was made by an arbitrator during this time, both parties

agreed to set aside the arbitrator's decision and approve a solution that had resulted from nearly another year of negotiations employing IBN. (Flint, 2002)

Six major accomplishments were achieved during the three years after the labor contract (MOU) was signed:

- 1.) In 2001, an interest-based, five-year extension was agreed upon that makes the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) good for a total of eight years.
- 2.) As a business practice, interest-based negotiation was institutionalized in the workplace through the Fire Labor-Management Team (FLMT), which collaboratively resolves workplace and service delivery problems.
- 3.) IBN training was extended to all members of the fire department. In this connection, three members have taken advanced IBN training, which allows them to act as facilitators for other departments
- 4.) There have been no grievances filed during the subsequent three years. This is the first time in anyone's memory that a grievance has not been filed for such a lengthy period.
- 5.) Because of the collaborative nature of the new relationship, more than \$1 million was saved from the overtime budget. The union expressed a willingness to work cooperatively to achieve additional cost savings in the development and assisted in the implementation of new fire service programs.
- 6.) The union became actively involved in the selection of a new fire chief. Members helped to write the recruitment profile describing the qualities and qualifications for a chief, participated in the interview panel for candidates, met and talked with finalists, and offered direct feedback on each finalist.

To be sure, disagreement still occurs, as it did over the recently adopted standards for staffing and response times from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). As in all such disagreements, however, both management and labor will jointly investigate how to address the new challenges.

Finally, this relationship became the model for all other city departments in Alameda. Enmity in the workplace was replaced with an open environment of effective communication between labor and management. Accusations resulting from distrust of one party by the other have given way to an atmosphere in which the benefit of the doubt is genuinely given to each other when disagreements occur.

However, this is still a work in progress. Both labor and management recognize that rebuilding the relationship will require an ongoing commitment to working in good faith and taking nothing for granted. These are predicates if the relationship is to recover fully. Everyone recognizes that the erosion in the relationship did not take place overnight but over years. Therefore, without a continuing commitment to each other, the process will not ultimately succeed. (Flint, 2002)

In order to explain the background of this problem and to discover the past, present and probable future impact of the problem on the Alameda Fire Department (AFD) it is necessary to consider many of the risk reduction programs that the managers of the AFD were attempting to pursue and the state of relations between labor and management and the level of organizational equity at the time the AFD started to adopt the IBN process. The AFD had just begun taking over responsibility for fire protection of a closed naval base full of potential for confined space rescues. Advanced Life Support

service was still in its infancy and a newly expanded water rescue program was still being developed. It was clear that we needed large “deposits” in our organizational equity “account” in order to obtain buy-in from the members and succeed in these risk reduction endeavors

The nature and objectives of the research necessary to evaluate the AFD Interest Based/Collaborative process and its effect on organizational equity and the development of risk reduction programs is reflective of the principles explained in the National Fire Academy’s *Leading Community Risk Reduction* course. The materials presented in Unit 3: Building Support encourages EFOP students to create a plan to change the organizational culture in support of community risk reduction and to gain support of the community for the risk reduction initiative, given an analysis of organizational and community attitudes and values and a desired organizational mission. The materials in Unit 3 provide a brief overview on the subject of identifying strategies for building organizational equity for community risk reduction. The unit begins by defining organizational equity, reviewing strategy and finishes by discussing ways to change the culture of the organization (*Leading Community Risk Reduction*, Student Manual, Pgs. SM 3-5 to SM 3-71).

This research will also pursue one of the United States Fire Administration’s five-year operational objectives by appropriately responding in a timely manner to emergent issues. It also assists in the development of comprehensive multi-hazard risk reduction plans led by a local fire service. The fire service and the City of Alameda in particular need to develop and evaluate methods of building organizational equity for community risk reduction programs

LITERATURE REVIEW

1.) What is Collaboration/IBN and how can it build organizational equity?

The collaborative approach to conflict resolution, also called mutual gains or integrative bargaining, argues for the possibility of solutions that all sides find acceptable. It embodies the notion of “win-win,” a core component of our principle of mutual gain. Collaboration is about identifying a common shared or joint goal and developing a process to achieve it. It is a process in which both parties exchange information openly, define their common problems, and create options to solve these problems. And while the collaborative process cannot guarantee that agreement will always be reached, more often than not, the analysis of interests, needs and desires helps the resolution process and ultimate agreement. (Van Slyke, 1999) This joint identification of the needs of the members in AFD is one of the basic building blocks for organizational equity.

IBN or Interest Based Negotiations is seen as an effective process for negotiations and problem solving. IBN is an inquiry based approach to problem solving and negotiations and is designed to bring problem solvers on both sides of an issue together in a relationship that encourages cooperation instead of competition (Glaser, 1998). Rather than imposing positions, or favorite solutions on one another, the parties work together to find the best possible solution. This active process involves a thorough understanding of each other’s motivations, and then a creative and purposeful search for “what ought to be” (Glaser, 1998).

“Interest-based negotiation is completely the opposite of the traditional positional-based negotiation that is engrained in the history of union and management bargaining with law enforcement,” stated Neil Bodine, founder of one interest based consulting firm, consultant for another newly merged interest-based organization and corporate counsel to PORAC. (Oberle, 2002)

The interest-based training that Bodine conducts ideally includes both labor and management personnel and consists of four components. The first component is to have participants engage in a mock negotiation scenario. Bodine said that participants are able to observe themselves and how they negotiate. “They become aware of their default reactions that have been embedded in their negotiation style,” stated Bodine. “More importantly, they learn what makes negotiations work and not work.” The second component to the training is to present the interest-based negotiations model. Instead of beginning with each side presenting a position, setting limits and making offers, interest-based negotiation involves identifying problems and finding solutions that meet the interests of both parties. (Oberle, 2002)

The model includes developing ground rules for how each member should treat each other and checking regularly on how both sides are following the rules. “An important part of this type of negotiation is the necessity to deal with personal issues as they come up and keep them separate from the larger negotiation process,” stated Bodine.

The third component is communication. Participants learn to ask questions to discover what people’s needs are and to develop a plan that explains possible solutions that can meet those needs. Meeting the needs of the AFD members is what will develop organizational equity. Bodine explained that establishing this kind of dialogue is much

more constructive than arguing back and forth and refusing to disclose information. The final component to interest-based training is learning how to build effective relationships. Bodine pointed out that conflict in relationships result from conflicts of norms and expectations (Oberle, 2002)

One of the major goals of IBN is to encourage collaboration between two groups. The two groups must strike a balance between advocacy, in which ideas are being asserted and inquiry, in which questions are framed in order to encourage participation of others. The goal in this decision making process is to “co-labor” together in the form of collaboration in which the parties demonstrate a high level of assertiveness (advocacy) as well as cooperativeness (inquiry) (Glaser, 1998). “Collaboration is a process in which two or more individuals with complimentary knowledge and skills focus on a common problem or issue and work together to create a resolution neither of them could have achieved alone” (Siecienski, 1999)

There are four major elements to the IBN/Collaboration process. The first is Understanding the Problem where the parties attempt to understand the interests and define the issues that need to be resolved. The second is Searching for Solutions. In this step the parties work as a team to generate options. The third is Reaching Agreements where the parties work together to a consensus solution. The final element is Reflection. During this final element the parties monitor the solution to evaluate its effectiveness. The process aims to achieve mutually acceptable outcomes. When the process is adopted broadly within the culture of an organization, it becomes an extremely powerful tool for achieving broad-based change and produces highly satisfactory results on some of the thorniest problems (Glaser, 1998). Applying this process to the development of a risk

reduction program such as a Wellness/Fitness program for all AFD firefighters allows the end result to be more successful given the fact that the process allowed all interests to be addressed through a broad-based, mutually acceptable result.

The IBN process can be used by a committee comprised of an equal number of union members and management members collaborating to achieve consensus on current issues. The committee using IBN employs a facilitator to manage the content by focusing the committee and he/she protects the process by remaining neutral and enforcing the ground rules. A recorder is also assigned to maintain the group record and to assist with group organization (Glaser, 1998). When consensus is achieved, members feel empowered and more willing to support fire management risk reduction initiatives.

IBN has been described as a refreshing change from “traditional” bargaining. The parties emphasize how they focus on interests, not positions; on problems, not people; how they created options for mutual gain, using objective criteria (Van Cleemput, 1996). The IBN process is a “win-win” approach that practices a team concept facilitated by a common goal of responding to common interests and not issues. Everyone in the process has an equal power, which is reinforced by a set of “norms” which are collectively agreed to prior to the bargaining process. (Van Cleemput, 1996)

Organizational equity is defined as “The positive potential for support of the organization’s leadership due to the day-to-day actions of the EFO” (LCRR, Student Manual, 2004). “Organizational equity is built when the EFO works to meet the needs of the men and women of the organization. When those needs are met a deposit is made in

an organizational “savings account,” an account from which withdrawals may be made in the future for such initiatives as organizational change” (LCRR, Student Manual, 2004).

Interest Based Negotiations and Collaboration are methods for meeting the needs of the men and women of the organization. The aim of these methods is to encourage involvement, build trust and empower the members of the organization. Once those goals are achieved the parties are more willing and successful in their attempts to solve issues and problems. These solutions meet the employee’s needs and equity is achieved (Glaser, 1998), (LCRR, Student Manual, 2004).

Research has revealed that the concept of empowerment is fundamental to collaborative efforts. The ability of an organization to give its employees authority to define and improve their jobs creates an environment that contributes to successful coalitions. The result of this practical explanation is a solid workforce with commitment to their jobs and companies (Siecienski, 1999). This commitment is the organizational equity that can be withdrawn by the EFOP at a later time to pursue the community risk reduction initiative (LCRR, Student Manual, 2004).

Allen D. Church in his Evaluation of Labor-Management Models writes about how collaboration can develop organizational equity when he explains, “There are benefits to management shared with labor in many cases”. He further states, “cooperative efforts can potentially increase worker commitment and help employees to identify with company goals” (Church, 1999).

Another reason for moving to IBN is that it is more productive. Traditional settlements do not promote relationships that focus energy on work. “The idea that

workers are on one side and management on the other always has seemed inconsistent with creating an organizational environment in which everyone is encouraged to cooperate in achieving the organization's goals." There is a growing realization from both labor and management that we are in the same boat. As there is a growing demand from the citizens that we serve to perform better, we must work together to improve public service. "The cooperative movement is an essential ingredient in improving the quality and delivery of government service." Difficult contract negotiations in the public sector do very little to improve public impressions or gain support for local government (Bartel, 1999). It follows then that fire managers employing IBN to develop risk reduction goals will benefit from the cooperative environment. Firefighters will be more willing to get involved and support risk reduction initiatives when they feel their interests are the same as management in many cases. The IBN process brings this realization to light.

The Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service has been clear from the outset that it regards IBB as an alternative to traditional bargaining, not as the next step in the evolution of collective bargaining. IBB is not, and should not, be seen as a replacement to the traditional adversarial bargaining model with which bargaining parties are so familiar. Among the potential advantages that the IBB process offers are:

1. An enhanced and cooperative relationship,
2. Heightened respect and trust between the parties,
3. An agreement containing more elegant solutions in terms of needs and permanence.

Because it is a cooperative process, those labor and management groups that have

achieved a cooperative relationship during the administration of their collective bargaining agreements are likely candidates for a fruitful IBB process. In this way their contract negotiation approach will be consistent with the rest of their relationship. Since IBB is also a problem-solving process, those parties who have complex, information laden, or changing-relationship issues to manage can benefit from the use of the model (Brommer, 2003).

The negotiation of labor and employment agreements is increasingly complex. Traditional bargaining is often about relative power and willingness to use it against each other, often at the expense of a better agreement or even the relationship. Interest based problem solving is a process that enables negotiators and leaders to become joint problem-solvers. It assumes that mutual gains is possible, that solutions which satisfy mutual interests are more durable, and that parties should help each other achieve a positive result (Carmen, 2004). When EFOs and union members work together through this process to develop risk reduction programs, they programs are more apt to stand the tests of time given the thorough exploration of the issues that the process provides.

2.) What criteria should be used to evaluate our use of Collaboration/IBN and its effect on organizational equity?

We know that a leader has achieved organizational equity when they have gained positive potential by meeting the needs of their personnel. In the simplest terms the leader will get something he wants (a successful risk reduction plan) by getting his personnel something they want (wages, benefits, job protection) (LCRR, Student Manual, 2004). Strategies that a leader may use for building support for risk reduction plans must empower members, establish a mission and goals and promote positive attitudes. The

strategy must also assist in establishing a budget, job requirements, establish professional development and provide a means for regular communication (LCRR, Student Manual, 2004).

In order to have a positive effect on organizational equity, our collaborative/IBN process will need to be successful. Given this logical assumption, the search for evaluative criteria concentrated on indicators of successful IBN/Collaboration.

The successful fire department of the new millennium will be structured to allow its employees to think for themselves and identify problems, solutions and opportunities. There needs to be a new partnership uniting union and management (IAFC Staff, Fire Chief Feb 1999). Fire organizations must develop trust and cooperation between labor and management to provide the best possible service to the communities we protect. In order to succeed we need to leave behind the adversarial or win-lose traditional relationship that existed in the past. In the new system of work organization, management must give up much of the authoritarian control it has exercised in the traditional model. The traditional system is also built on the mutual distrust, which is why it relies on a hierarchical command and control regime. The new system, in contrast, can function effectively only if those deep suspicions are dispelled and replaced by mutual respect (IAFC Staff, 1999)

Workplace Conflict Resolution, a nationally recognized alternative dispute resolution consulting firm has found that organizations employing IBN/Collaborative based problem solving are more likely successful when: 1.) The parties have some history of joint cooperation, 2.) They dedicate sufficient time to the process, 3.) The parties are

willing to share relevant information, 4.) The parties forgo their right to use power as the sole means of winning, and 5.) Participants and stakeholders understand and accept the IBN process (Carmen, 2004).

Author Steve McCurley argues there are five elements or criteria needed to build understanding and collaboration. Those five criteria are: 1.) A shared goal or mission to be accomplished. 2.) Common values about the world and behavior. 3.) Mutual respect for the abilities and contributions of other members. 4.) A belief or trust that other members of the team will help look after them. 5.) A sense of interdependence, a feeling that your own weaknesses are compensated for by the strengths of another member of the team (McCurley, 1996)

The Drucker Foundation published a workbook entitled “Meeting the Collaboration Challenge” This workbook identifies twenty factors that influence the success of collaborations:

- 1.) Factors that relate to Environment: History of collaboration or cooperation, Collaborative group is seen as a leader, Favorable political and social climate,
- 2.) Factors related to Membership characteristics: Mutual respect, understanding and trust, Appropriate cross section of members, Members see collaboration as in their self-interest, Ability to compromise.

- 3.) Factors related to Process and Structure: Members share a stake in process and outcome, Multiple layers of participation, Flexibility, Appropriate pace of development.
- 4.) Factors related to Communication: Open and Frequent Communication, Established informal relationships and communication links.
- 5.) Factors related to Purpose: Concrete obtainable goals and objectives, Shared vision, Unique purpose
- 6.) Factors related to Resources: Sufficient funds, Staff, Materials and Time, Skilled Leadership (Drucker, 2002).

David Chrislip of the National Civic League and Carl Larson of the University of Denver spent five years studying the collaborative process. They developed a list of ten keys to successful collaboration:

1. Good timing and clear need. Some stakeholders were ready to act with a sense of urgency.
2. Strong stakeholder groups. Well-organized, they could speak or act for those they represented.
3. Broad-based involvement. There were many participants, from several sectors.
4. Credibility and openness of process. Participants saw the process as credible, as fair (not tilted to any one group), as open (not excluding any important stakeholders), and as meaningful (making or influencing real decisions, not just rubber-stamping).

5. Commitment and/or involvement of high-level, visible leaders. Mayors, CEOs, city council members, and executive directors either attended or openly backed the process and gave decision-making power to their representatives.
6. Support or acquiescence of "established" authorities or powers. City councils, mayors, chambers of commerce, and the like agreed to implement the results of the collaboration--at least in part because they were involved from the start.
7. Ability to overcome mistrust and skepticism. The initial mistrust of the participants--of each other or of the process--decreased over time.
8. Strong leadership of the process. Leadership of the process, rather than of a particular point of view, included keeping everyone involved through difficult periods, acknowledging small successes, helping negotiate the hard points, and enforcing group norms.
9. Interim successes. Successes along the way built credibility and momentum, provided encouragement to the stakeholders, and helped keep them involved.
10. A shift to broader concerns. Through the process, people came to see how necessary it was that they focus on the needs of the whole community, not just of their particular constituency (Flower, 1995)

The President and CEO of the Center for Collaborative Solutions has identified a few ingredients that set up the ideal environment for the collaborative process to succeed. She calls them the CURE ingredients:

- 1.) Commitment: Leaders, both natural and elected/appointed, need to be open to innovative ideas and solutions to old problems. And they need to be committed to staying the course during the growing pains that so often accompany the road of change.
- 2.) Understanding: Common understanding and appreciation of the interdependent nature of a community are critical to success
- 3.) Recognition: True collaboration is built on recognition of individual needs, as well as the needs of the whole organization.
- 4.) Energy: Harnessing the energy of everyone's imagination and creativity is a cornerstone of success in collaborative efforts (Walden, 2004).

To succeed in the collaborative process it really comes down to honesty.

Management needs to provide an honest reporting of everything that transpires good and bad. They also need to put the information in context and help employees learn how to interpret what they hear.

The concept of empowerment has also been found to be fundamental to collaborative efforts. The ability of an organization to give its employees authority to define and improve their jobs creates an environment that contributes to successful coalitions. The result of this practical explanation is a solid workforce with commitment to their jobs and companies. The drawback of conventional management and its reliance on tradition is a hindering factor. In the fire service, the status quo, a sense of permanence and tradition, has been the backbone of the culture and a constant for many of our organizations (Siecienski, 1999).

A final implication that has resulted in enhanced organizations is the ability to develop clear lines of honest, open communication. The ability of partners in collaborative efforts to clearly understand the implications of their actions provides an opportunity to develop improved service delivery. If partners are included from all disciplines of the community, the improved service will be responsive to the consumer (Siecienski, 1999).

Mediators from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) practice IBN also known as Interest Based Bargaining or IBB. Some assessment indicators that the mediators look for include:

- Evidence of successful labor-management cooperation during the term of the past contract.
- The willingness of the parties to fully share bargaining information.
- Sufficient time remaining prior to contract expiration to complete the necessary sequence of assessment/decision-making, training, and application of the IBB process.
- A willingness to forego the use of power to secure outcomes.
- The absence of clearly divisive, critical issues and/or fixed positions on important issues.
- An understanding and acceptance of the process by key decision-makers, bargaining teams and constituents.
- Significant motivation by the parties to change their existing traditional bargaining styles (Brommer, 2003)

A few “lessons learned” can be used as criteria to assist in evaluation of the success of IBN in Alameda. The effects they have had on organizational equity are offered by city manager James Flint in his article on Mending Labor-Management Relationships published in Public Management magazine. He offers the following:

- 1.) First, acknowledge, and then set aside, any organizational “baggage” that may block the development of trust.
- 2.) Generate a highly positive workplace environment.
- 3.) Know that overcoming a top-down, hierarchically driven organizational environment is difficult. (Flint, 2002)

3.) Has the Interest Based/Collaborative process built organizational equity in the Alameda Fire Department and are changes or improvements needed?

The results of the survey will provide the most insight into the success or failure of the IBN process and its effect on organizational equity. The next best sources for an evaluation of the process are the opinions of the Executive Fire Officer for the Alameda Fire Department, Fire Chief James L. Christiansen and the Union President, Fire Captain Michael D’Orazi. On two separate days I interviewed both members. I asked three questions: 1.) Has the Interest Based/Collaborative Process built organizational equity in the Alameda Fire Department? 2.) Considering IBN/Collaboration, what have we done well, what are some of our success stories? 3.) What changes or improvements are needed for the AFD IBN/Collaborative process?

On August 4, 2004, I interviewed Captain D’Orazi. He had the following responses to the three questions. 1.) Has the Interest Based/Collaborative Process built organizational equity in the Alameda Fire Department? “Yes, it has. However, we have

not completed the journey. It is a long way to the objective. There have been many changes in the AFD organization that have provided challenges to the process. It takes “give and take” We have faced changes in the department leadership, major changes in the composition of the FLMT and there are a lot of different personalities involved in the process. It takes time to find a balance.” 2.) Considering IBN/Collaboration, what have we done well, what are some of our success stories? “Since 1998 (over 6 years) we have not dropped the ball, we have kept the process going. This is especially significant since the process has survived despite the fact that the organization has seen drastic changes over the years, and we haven’t lost steam or given up on the process.” “The IBN process has helped us through some tough issues such as our First Responder Advanced Life Support, Water Rescue and Wellness Fitness program development” (all risk reduction programs). “We have adopted IBN as an organizational approach to dealing with issues in the department.” “There have been no contract grievances or disputes since the process was adopted.” “IBN changes the culture of the organization to be more inclusive. More members are involved in the daily operations of the department. Even though it is still a work in progress, we have moved away from the command and control model in day-to-day operations to a more inclusive model. The process has helped, along with others, to address employees’ needs. Anyone in the organization can bring important issues to the FLMT.” 3.) What changes or improvements are needed for the AFD IBN/Collaborative process? “We need to continue improving our communication. We need information to flow down the chain and back up again. There needs to be feedback from the bottom to the top. We need to improve the availability of internal information, for example, our policies are in need of attention. Many are outdated and the policies

cannot be found in one place. More attention should be given to maintaining a belief in the process. A lot of members that know the history (labor relations) need to tell the story to others so they know things (primarily wages, hours and working conditions) are much better now. Maybe we need a rotational process for the FLMT. We need to continue to work on the personality conflicts that affect our organizational relationship. Finally, we should consider changing the make-up of the FLMT and re-think the time commitment of members. Maybe there should be some rotational policy.” (D’Orazi, 2004)

On August 12, 2004, I interviewed Fire Chief James Christiansen. I asked him the same three questions about the IBN/Collaboration process and organizational equity. 1.) Has the Interest Based/Collaborative Process built organizational equity in the Alameda Fire Department? “Yes, in several ways. The members of the fire department feel they are a vital part of the team. Their improved relationship with management through IBN brings them a better understanding of the complexity of decision-making. Everyone on the department has a voice regarding department business through their representatives now. Their voice moves forward in many ways: informal, association meetings, executive board representatives, chain of command or through management. Representation can be on either side and this is how the members’ needs are met.”

“One of the great things about this process is that it can diffuse, equalize or balance out an abusive, autocratic manager. Through this process and agenda, we expose our interests, needs, challenges and desires out in the open. This process perpetuates the organizational equity by bringing more voices forward and by allowing more ownership in the organization.” The IBN process develops support of leadership by exposing the motives, impetus or need for a decision or direction. The process provides a deeper

understanding for everyone. Conversely, by exposing, it creates a lot of critical thinking in the process, further defining the direction. The process exposes the reasons and need to go in a particular direction. This critical thinking directs all minds focusing together toward a common goal.”

2.) Considering IBN/Collaboration, what have we done well, what are some of our success stories? “We have had a few wins. One example is our agreement to allow shift trades between members with different qualifications. The decision to allow EMTs and Paramedics to trade shifts had potential costs. Using anecdotal information, we agreed to approve these trades for a trial period. We used the process to achieve consensus.”

“The parties discovered that the city may save money when some employees ended up working in a higher classification. The union cooperated in a trial period during which we evaluated the data and discovered that this decision was in the best interest of both parties.”

“There was initially a lot of “positionalism” on this issue, but in the end labor was right, the trades provided flexibility and did not cost the city a lot of extra money.” The IBN process was used and members were willing to work hard and engage in critical thinking that allowed us to obtain the factual information that could be used to help us make the decision”

“Another example of a “win” was the development and agreement on the Wellness-Fitness Program for the Firefighters. Labor pursued this program for years. Finally the funds for the program were obtained from the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Fund. After the funds were obtained all of the members worked together collaboratively

to develop the program into a successful mandatory program that met the needs of the firefighters and the city. It was truly a win-win situation. Without full participation by all the members, details would have been missed.”

“We also excel at communication. This is a positive. The strict application of the queue is a bit cumbersome in that it stifles a free exchange, but in general there is good conversation at our meetings. Audience participation is also good, when they do show up. Attendance at our team meetings could be better. More exchange would be good.”

“We are also good at critical thinking on issues. By virtue of the process itself – we constantly ask, what are the implications? The process makes you look at all sides of an issue. So much is exposed. The perspectives of the management being what they are: budget and the community needs and those of the union: job protections, it allows us to look at every angle on an issue.” 3.) What changes or improvements are needed for the AFD IBN/Collaborative process? “The team needs to go away and talk about a common vision for the process, the team and the organization. We need to ask ourselves where do we want to go and then move it to the next step.”

“We also need to keep the members interested and motivated. It would be easy to walk away from the process because of fatigue. It is difficult to keep the members motivated for the hard work.”

“The process also hinders open communication. It would be nice to have more open, casual communication to hear what people are thinking. We should be able to break off a few members and talk honestly in the corner. Communication to the rest of the organization would also improve with better attendance at the FLMT meetings.”

(Christiansen, 2004)

PROCEDURES

The need for this research was evident considering the fact that the City of Alameda Fire Department had never evaluated the IBN process nor had they evaluated the success IBN/Collaboration may be having towards building organizational equity. The individual members of the AFD may have their own personal opinions about the value and effectiveness of the IBN process, but no one has evaluated the success of the process and its effect on organizational equity based on widely accepted criteria established by subject matter experts. The desired outcome of this research project was to complete that evaluation and to develop suggested changes or improvements if the evaluation demonstrates a need.

Research Methodology

The research was evaluative in that a literature review was conducted in order to learn about the IBN/Collaboration process and to develop a survey for all AFD members to evaluate the success of the IBN/Collaborative process and its effect on Organizational equity. Research literature collection began with a literature review at the National Fire Academy's Learning Resource Center (LRC) in March of 2004. The LRC's computerized database was searched using such keywords as "collaboration", interest based negotiations" and "industrial relations" The information gathered was obtained from books, trade magazines, quasi-governmental associations, government agencies and other available printed publications. An Internet search using the same keywords such as "industrial relations", "interest-based negotiation", "collaboration" and "organizational equity" revealed many sites with relevant information.

Much of the literature collected was books, articles and training publications developed by subject matter experts, emergency service organizations, local, state and federal governmental organizations, unions and other available publications. These books and other publications were found at local libraries including the University of California, Berkeley, Institute of Industrial Relations Library and from periodicals received at the Alameda Fire Department offices. The Fire Chief and the Union President were also interviewed in order to obtain their perspectives and opinions as leaders in the AFD.

The next step was to prepare a survey to distribute to the complete membership of the City of Alameda Fire Department. This survey was designed to evaluate the success of the IBN/Collaborative process in the Alameda Fire Department and the effect it has on organizational equity that could benefit the success of risk reduction programs. The criteria used to develop the questions were also taken from the literature review. The survey and a cover letter that accompanied the survey are contained in Appendix “A” All AFD personnel were surveyed regarding their opinions on a wide range of IBN/Collaborative evaluative criteria. The entire organization was surveyed despite the fact that they are not involved with FLMT on a daily basis because their opinions regarding whether or not the process meets their “needs” will be the true measure of whether or not this process is effective.

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumed: Only knowledgeable individuals experienced in the subject of interest based negotiations, collaboration, team building, organizational theory and labor relations were the authors of the written research materials that were used, and that these same individuals were honest and unbiased in their research and opinions.

Limitations: The collection of AFD survey data was limited by interest in the subject, various leaves for AFD members and a working knowledge of the more advanced IBN/Collaborative criteria. Practicing or trained FLMT members would be the only group to really understand several of the criteria in the survey. For that reason, I decided to collect data on the responses from only that group separately from the whole organization.

Definitions

Arbitration: The process by which the parties to a dispute submit their differences to the judgment of an impartial person or group appointed by mutual consent or statutory provision.

Collaboration: To work together, especially in a joint intellectual effort.

Empowerment: To invest with power, especially legal power or official authority.

Enmity: Deep-seated, often mutual hatred.

Equity: The state, quality, or ideal of being just, impartial, and fair.

Facilitator: To make easier: help bring about

Hierarchical: Of, relating to, or arranged in a hierarchy: a body of persons in authority

RESULTS

1.) What is Collaboration/IBN and how can it build organizational equity?

Collaboration is about identifying a common shared or joint goal and developing a process to achieve it. IBN is an inquiry based approach to problem solving and negotiations and is designed to bring problem solvers on both sides of an issue together in a relationship that encourages cooperation instead of competition.

A thorough explanation of Interest Based Negotiations, the Collaborative Process and how it builds organizational equity was derived from the materials gathered during the literature review. This explanation provides the underpinnings of this research. One needs to understand the process well before it can be evaluated. An EFO seeking to build organizational equity in their department should study the basics as presented in the literature review of this paper and then seek professional training in the process.

2.) What criteria should be used to evaluate our use of Collaboration/IBN and its effect on organizational equity?

The literature review revealed a large number of criteria that were useful for evaluating the collaborative/IBN process. I chose the criteria that were the most useful and pertinent to our process, the method in which we use the process and the fire service in general. All of the resulting criteria are included in the survey below.

Survey Results

The category receiving the largest number of votes in each criterion is bolded.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.) I am more willing to support the programs and initiatives of Fire Management due to the use of the IBN/Collaborative process in the AFD	23	33	5	1	2
2.) Labor and Management are willing to share relevant information.	6	38	14	5	1
3.) I believe that my workplace needs are being met due to the use of IBN/Collaboration in the AFD.	7	30	14	9	2
4.) Labor and Management forgo their right to use power as the means of winning.	7	27	17	11	1
5.) The IBN/Collaborative process has developed a mutual respect, understanding and trust for each other	2	24	26	9	2
6.) I understand and accept the IBN/Collaborative process.	18	34	9	1	1
7.) Labor and Management share a common mission and goals	4	29	17	11	3
8.) The IBN/Collaborative process has assisted the AFD in overcoming a top-down, hierarchically driven organizational environment.	17	31	8	5	1
9.) The IBN/Collaborative process has helped to eliminate the “Us vs. Them” attitude in the AFD	6	24	19	11	4
10.) Labor and Management equally share accountability for the results of FLMT decisions/outcomes	10	30	12	8	3
11.) The FLMT as a group is seen as a “leader” in the AFD.	10	33	12	9	0
12.) There is a favorable political and social climate for the IBN/Collaborative process in the AFD.	6	37	13	6	0
13.) The FLMT represents an appropriate cross section of AFD members.	8	40	11	3	1
14.) Use of the FLMT, IBN/Collaborative process is in my best interest.	13	41	7	3	0
15.) Members of FLMT have shown they have the ability to compromise	7	36	16	4	1

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
16.) Labor and Management practice open and frequent communication	2	31	18	12	0
17.) Labor and Management have established informal relationships and communication links	4	36	17	4	0
18.) Labor and Management have shared concrete and obtainable goals and objectives	7	32	17	5	0
19.) Labor and Management have a shared vision	5	24	24	11	0
20.) Collaborative/IBN functions are sufficiently funded.	3	19	31	7	3
21.) The FLMT is a credible, fair, meaningful and open process.	9	37	13	4	1
22.) The IBN/Collaborative process has the commitment and/or involvement of high level, visible leaders (Fire management, City Management, Council)	11	28	17	6	1
23.) The initial mistrust and skepticism of the IBN/Collaborative process diminished over time.	1	34	21	8	0
24.) Labor and Management share a stake in the process of FLMT and the outcome it produces.	17	34	10	2	0
25.) There is a strong leadership of the IBN process rather than of a particular point of view	1	29	23	7	2
26.) The FLMT has celebrated successes along the way, building credibility and momentum.	4	46	13	1	0
27.) The IBN/Collaborative Process has convinced me of the need to focus on the whole organization, not just a particular constituency	12	37	9	4	1
28.) The “leaders” of the AFD (formal and informal) are open to new ideas and are committed to staying the course with Collaboration/IBN	3	41	15	5	0
29.) There is a common understanding and appreciation between Labor and Management of the interdependent nature of the two groups	2	28	24	10	0
30.) The FLMT recognizes individual needs as well as the needs of the whole organization	3	34	15	10	0
31.) The IBN/Collaborative process harnesses the energy of everyone’s imagination and creativity.	3	25	21	13	0
32.) The IBN/Collaborative process provides me with a sense of empowerment	4	27	17	12	2
33.) The FLMT dedicates a sufficient amount of time to the IBN process.	6	24	22	12	0

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
34.) AFD Labor and Management have some history of joint cooperation.	9	40	11	4	0
35.) Use of IBN/Collaboration has increased the honesty between Labor and Management.	7	35	17	5	0
36.) Use of IBN/Collaboration has moved the AFD culture away from conventional management techniques reliant on tradition and legacy.	14	37	7	4	1
37.) Labor and Management have acknowledged and set aside organizational “baggage” that blocks the development of trust	2	21	25	13	2
38.) The IBN process helps to build a highly positive workplace environment	5	31	17	10	0
39.) The IBN/Collaborative process has developed a mutual respect for the abilities and contributions of All members of the AFD.	7	30	17	8	1
40.) The IBN/Collaborative process has developed a belief or trust that Labor and Management will look after my interests	3	31	18	10	1
41.) The IBN/Collaborative process has developed a sense of interdependence, a feeling that your own weaknesses are compensated for by the strengths of another member of the team	17	27	22	6	1

97 Surveys Distributed

64 Surveys Returned

66% Return Rate

The average years of service in the AFD among those responding: 12 years

Ranks responding: Chiefs 6 Captains 19 Operators 11 FF 24 Four left blank

Current or past member of FLMT: 15 Respondents

Formal training in the IBN Process: 20 Respondents

3.) Has the Interest Based/Collaborative process built organizational equity in the Alameda Fire Department?

Survey Analysis

It is clear from the data that a majority of the Alameda Fire Department members feel the IBN/Collaborative process is generally successful and creating organizational equity. The criteria were written and presented so that an “agree” response to any one of the 41 criteria meant that the respondent recognized the presence of an element vital to the success of IBN/Collaboration and the building of organizational equity. Every one of the 41 criteria received more responses on the “agree” side than on the “disagree” side.

The top five criteria receiving the most “agree” side votes from high to low were as follows: #1 (IBN causes program support), #14 (IBN is in my best interest), #6 (Understanding and acceptance of the IBN process), tied for fourth place #24 (Labor and Management sharing a stake in the outcome of the process) and #36 (IBN has moved AFD away from tradition and legacy) and finally #26 (A strong leadership of the IBN process).

Looking at just the responses from the past or present FLMT members (15 respondents) revealed some interesting data. The top three criteria in rank order receiving the most “agree” responses were as follows: First place was #34 (history of cooperation), second place is #1 (willingness to support programs) and in third place there were several criteria with the same number of agreeable responses: #6 (understanding and acceptance of the process), #8 (overcome hierarchical organization), #14 (IBN process in my best interest), #26 (celebrating success and finally #36 (IBN moved organization from tradition and legacy).

4.) Are changes or improvements needed for the Alameda Fire Department Interest Based / Collaborative Process?

There are several areas that the data suggests are areas for improvement. Any question or criteria that more than 15% of respondents scored on the “disagree” side deserves a closer look. There are 17 criteria in that category. They are criteria numbers 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 16, 19, 20, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 37, 38 and 40.

The top five criteria in rank order receiving “disagree” side votes are as follows: #9 (elimination of “us vs. them” attitude), #7 (a common mission and goals), tied for third place #31 (harnessing energy and creativity) and #37 (“baggage” blocking trust), a four way tie for fourth place between #4 (forgo right to use power), #16 (open and frequent communication), #32 (empowerment) and #33 (sufficient time) and finally a five way tie for fifth place between #3 (needs met), #5 (mutual respect and understanding), #10 (accountability), #19 (shared vision) and #40 (IBN looks after my interests).

It is also important to note that criteria #5, (mutual respect and understanding), #19 (shared vision), #20 (sufficient funding) and #37 (“baggage” blocking trust) all received a neutral vote equal to or higher than “agree” side votes. The reason could either be they do not understand or have an opinion on the criteria or they do not have the actual IBN or FLMT experience needed to evaluate the presence of those criteria. Regardless of the reason for the high neutral vote, a majority neutral vote on a criteria coupled with a high “disagree” side vote indicates the need for improvement in that area.

The top three criteria receiving the most number of “disagree” responses in rank order amongst present or former FLMT members were as follows: First place was #33 (sufficient time for process), second place was #7 (common mission and goals) and

several criteria tied for third place as follows: #4 (forgo right to use power), #5 (IBN developed understanding and trust), #10 (shared accountability for outcomes), #19 (shared vision), #29 (understanding of interdependent nature of groups), #31 (process harnesses imagination), #32 (empowerment), and finally #40 (both sides will look after my interests).

DISCUSSION/IMPLICATIONS

The focus of the research was to gain an understanding of the IBN/Collaboration process, to evaluate its success and the effect it was having on organization equity for risk reduction programs and to identify areas needing improvement. This section will take each research question in order and discuss conclusions regarding the study results.

1.) What is Collaboration/IBN and how can it build organizational equity?

IBN or Interest Based Negotiations is seen as an effective process for negotiations and problem solving. IBN is an inquiry based approach to problem solving and negotiations and is designed to bring problem solvers on both sides of an issue together in a relationship that encourages cooperation instead of competition (Glaser, 1998).

Interest Based Negotiations and Collaboration are methods for meeting the needs of the men and women of the organization. The aim of these methods is to encourage involvement, build trust and empower the members of the organization. Once those goals are achieved the parties are more willing and successful in their attempts to solve issues and problems. These solutions meet the employee's needs and equity is achieved (Glaser and Associates, 1998), (LCRR, Student Manual, 2004).

Back in 1998, the members of the Alameda Fire Department had no idea what IBN was or how it worked. A new city manager had the foresight to bring the process to Alameda in an effort to solve a long-standing labor dispute. With the training complete and a contract settlement achieved, the IBN/Collaborative process was put to use on other issues. We developed a labor-management team to work together to solve day-to-day operational problems and to set the course for the future for new programs. Both the Fire Chief and the Union President agree that the process has provided a tool to bring the parties together to work on the issues.

Over the years our use of the process has seen it's "up and downs." I know from personal experience that after many meetings members on both sides of the fence have felt mentally drained. On the whole, the process has been more of a success than a failure. All of the time and money spent on this form of decision-making and problem solving is money well spent. Every AFD member involved in the process will tell you that a bad day at FLMT is far greater than the years we spent arguing, litigating and traditional bargaining "game playing" over contracts, programs and issues. Today, AFD member feel more empowered through the process and more willing to support management programs. AFD Members are now inclined to support programs because their needs are met. "IBN Participants learn to ask questions to discover what people's needs are and to develop a plan that explains possible solutions that can meet those needs." (Oberle, 2002)

- 2.) What criteria should be used to evaluate our use of Collaboration/IBN and its effect on organizational equity?

Workplace Conflict Resolution, a nationally recognized alternative dispute resolution consulting firm has found that organizations employing IBN/Collaborative based problem solving are more likely successful when: 1.) The parties have some history of joint cooperation, 2.) They dedicate sufficient time to the process, 3.) The parties are willing to share relevant information, 4.) The parties forgo their right to use power as the sole means of winning, and 5.) Participants and stakeholders understand and accept the IBN process (Carmen, 2004).

All of these criteria identified above, along with many others were incorporated into the survey presented to all of the AFD members. The majority of the criteria evoked a clear-cut response, either an “agree” or “disagree” response. There were a few criteria however that I feel were less than clear to the readers and therefore they gave the criteria a “neutral” response. For example, criteria #5 on the survey “The IBN/Collaborative process has developed a mutual respect, understanding and trust for each other” is in hindsight a very difficult criterion to evaluate, especially if the respondent is not a member of the FLMT. In future surveys I would consider fewer, clear, straightforward questions.

It was easier to predict the outcome on several other criteria. There is a couple that I knew, from personal experience on FLMT, would receive a very high “disagree” evaluation. That hunch was borne out on the results for criteria # 16 (open and frequent communication) and #33 (sufficient time). They both received high disagree votes in the survey. There has been much discussion over the fact that we overload an agenda once a month and end up using our time in an inefficient way by rushing through each item. We

feel pressured to reach a conclusion knowing that it will be a month before we have an opportunity to discuss the issue again.

We would perhaps be better served to meet for shorter periods of time, with a manageable agenda in a more relaxed setting. Fire Chief James Christiansen agrees with this conclusion. During his interview he commented, “It would be nice to have more open, casual communication to hear what people are thinking. We should be able to break off a few members and talk honestly in the corner.” (Christiansen, 2004)

3.) Has the Interest Based/Collaborative process built organizational equity in the Alameda Fire Department?

The results of the survey indicate that the members of the Alameda Fire Department agree that once they are empowered by their involvement in the decision making process they are more willing to support management programs. Every one of the 41 survey criteria received more responses on the “agree” side than on the “disagree” side. “The ability of an organization to give its employees authority to define and improve their jobs creates an environment that contributes to successful coalitions.” (Siecienski, 1999). IBN has allowed AFD members to have that authority.

The most telling result is that the one criteria receiving the most “agreeable” responses is #1 which is really the main question presented by the research project. Criteria #1 read as follows “I am more willing to support the programs and initiatives of Fire Management due to the use of the IBN/Collaborative process in the AFD”

I know from my twenty-four years of experience in the Alameda Fire Department that we would never have been able to successfully implement risk reduction programs such as our Mandatory Wellness/Fitness Program or our First Responder Advanced Life

Support Program without IBN. Several years ago, when management dictated every decision on a program and the members were without a labor contract, program or service delivery changes were always met with suspicion and often with a grievance.

Today I repeatedly hear positive input from members throughout the organization that they feel more involved and empowered because their voice is heard and their needs are met. Many times we have difficult and long discussion on issues and programs, but in the end we are far ahead than in years past.

Fire Chief James Christiansen agrees, stating in his interview “This process perpetuates the organizational equity by bringing more voices forward and by allowing more ownership in the organization.” (Christiansen, 2004) Union President Mike D’Orazi also agrees: “The IBN process has helped us through some tough issues such as our First Responder Advanced Life Support, Water Rescue and Wellness Fitness program development” (D’Orazi, 2004)

4.) Are changes or improvements needed for the Alameda Fire Department Interest Based / Collaborative Process?

The survey identifies 17 different areas in which the AFD use of the IBN process could be improved. The labor management team (FLMT), a group that really understands the process and it’s effects, identified the following areas for improvement: First place was #33 (sufficient time for process), second place was #7 (common mission and goals) and several criteria tied for third place as follows: #4 (forgo right to use power), #5 (IBN developed understanding and trust), #10 (shared accountability for outcomes), #19 (shared vision), #29 (understanding of interdependent nature of groups), #31 (process

harnesses imagination), #32 (empowerment), and finally #40 (both sides will look after my interests).

As a member of FLMT I have experienced the process first hand from the beginning. It has always been obvious to me that IBN is a great process that has brought labor and management closer together to work on problems and programs, however it is not perfect. Labor will always be looking out for members' rights in the areas of wages hours and working conditions. Management will always be looking at the financial "bottom line", service delivery and what is right for the members of the community. These givens make it a challenge to come together on visions, missions and goals. IBN is all about identifying a common shared or joint goal and developing a process to achieve it. (Van Slyke, 1999)

Another standard is that Management is the group that is ultimately accountable for decisions. This standard makes it difficult to convince others, such as those on the side of labor, that if they want to join in on the decision making, enjoy the empowerment, that the cost is shared accountability for the decision. Along with the empowerment comes the ownership and responsibility for things like customer service, and a balanced budget.

Budget challenges in Alameda have required fiscal restraint for the fire department. We have been facing the possibility of reductions to the amount of overtime budgeted for our FLMT meetings. This situation has recently threatened the mere existence of IBN. Given this recent situation, I am not surprised that the criteria in the survey regarding "sufficient funding" received very high "disagree" votes. The budget has stabilized lately and the FLMT is no longer in such grave danger. We need to

effectively communicate this to the whole organization to provide assurances that we are committed to the process.

I believe we should concentrate on three areas to improve: Communication – Labor and Management need to spend more time together, perhaps in a more relaxed setting. With communication comes understanding and trust. Two things we need more of. We also need to work on a joint vision. Without a collective idea of what we want to be as an organization, we will always butt heads on an issue. Finally, we need to continue with team building. We need to shed the “baggage” from the past once and for all so that we can move on with the business of the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The survey data supports a conclusion that the IBN/Collaborative process is successful and does create organizational equity to support community risk reduction programs presented by the EFO. The Alameda Fire Department should continue with the practice of IBN/Collaboration. The Alameda Fire Department, however, clearly needs to work towards improving in several key areas of the IBN/Collaborative process in order become more successful. The survey results indicate that some time and attention is needed working on improving in the following areas or “success criteria”:

- 1.) #9 Elimination of “us vs. them” attitude
- 2.) #7 Develop common mission and goals
- 3.) #31 Harnessing everyone’s energy and creativity
- 4.) #37 Eliminate the “baggage” blocking trust
- 5.) #4 Consider forgoing the right to use power
- 6.) #16 Develop open and frequent communication

- 7.) #32 Develop the sense of empowerment
- 8.) #33 Ensure that sufficient time is spent on the process
- 9.) #3 Continue to meet the needs of the membership
- 10.) #5 Continue to develop mutual respect, understanding and trust
- 11.) #10 Share accountability in outcomes
- 12.) #19 Develop a shared vision
- 13.) #40 Ensure that IBN looks after everyone's interest
- 14.) #29 Develop an interdependent nature between labor and management

The labor-management team should ensure that adequate funding is available to support their activities. This would include hiring consultants to “coach” the team through some of the criteria improvement areas identified above. Some of the criteria require a truly dedicated effort to put in the time it takes to work through the tough issues. The team should consider a retreat and some re-training on IBN to develop their skills.

The team should also revisit some of their basic functions such as setting a joint vision along with the mission and goals. These basics may be in place and it may just be time for a refresher. What is crucial to remember is that without these basics there is no foundation for the team and the organization to move forward in a collaborative way. When the parties share a vision they will feel more empowered and more willing to accept accountability for the outcomes of the teams work.

Clearly, one of the best ways to improve IBN/Collaboration is to improve the communication between the parties. The parties should spend more time together, perhaps in a less formal manner. The more time the two sides spend talking and coming together, the greater chance they have to develop trust and understanding. Instead of

meeting monthly using a facilitator and following all the formal procedures, perhaps the FLMT needs to meet on a weekly or bi-weekly basis with whoever is available on the team in order to increase and/or improve communication. It is likely that frequent and more informal meeting sessions will improve the trust between the parties and quite possibly help improve organizational equity by removing “old baggage” issues and/or eliminate the “us vs. them” attitude. The FLMT group also needs to communicate regularly with the complete membership of the organization. I will also recommend that another follow-up evaluation of the IBN process be conducted sometime in the next six months to a year.

Any fire service member considering the use of IBN/Collaboration as a method of building organizational equity should be aware of these important success criteria early on and through-out the process to increase their chances for success.

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City Of Alameda
Inter-Department Memorandum

Appendix "A"

To: All AFD Members

From: Deputy Chief Chris Reilly
Operations Division

Date: July 23, 2004

Re: Fire Labor Management Team/Interest Based Negotiation/ Collaborative Process Survey

I am currently enrolled in the Executive Fire Officer (EFO) Program at the National Fire Academy. After each class I am required to complete an applied research project (ARP) within six months. The most recent class I attended was "Leading Community Risk Reduction". This class teaches fire managers how to lead successful risk reduction programs. These programs can be developed to address issues such as wildland/urban interface fires, the need for early cardiac defibrillation or juvenile firesetters.

A risk reduction program will only be successful if the executive fire officer gains support from various groups within and outside the organization. The internal support for the risk reduction programs proposed by the EFO is called "organizational equity". The definition provided in the class was that "organizational equity is the positive potential for support of the organization's leadership...due to the day to day actions of the EFO" and that "Organizational equity is built when the EFO works to meet the needs of the men and women of the organization"

My ARP seeks to determine whether or not the IBN/Collaborative Process builds "organizational equity" in the AFD in support of our risk reduction programs (ex: FRALS). I am interested in determining whether FLMT and the IBN/Collaborative process are successful and if not, what we can do to make it work.

After completing an extensive literature review on the subject, I have developed a survey for all members to complete that will assist me in evaluating the success of our collaborative process and it's effect on "organizational equity".

I would appreciate it if you would take the time to complete the attached survey. I realize the survey maybe a bit lengthy, but I wanted it to be thorough. Please send the completed survey back to me via department mail by August 13, 2004. Anonymous responses are fine. I will report the findings when I complete the ARP. Thank you very much for your assistance.

Chris Reilly

Chris Reilly, Deputy Fire Chief

Appendix “A”

National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Program Applied Research Project For Leading Community Risk Reduction / Chris Reilly

Survey evaluating the practice of collaboration and interest based negotiations and its effect on organizational equity in the Alameda Fire Department.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.) I am more willing to support the programs and initiatives of Fire Management due to the use of the IBN/Collaborative process in the AFD					
2.) Labor and Management are willing to share relevant information.					
3.) I believe that my workplace needs are being met due to the use of IBN/Collaboration in the AFD.					
4.) Labor and Management forgo their right to use power as the means of winning.					
5.) The IBN/Collaborative process has developed a mutual respect, understanding and trust for each other					
6.) I understand and accept the IBN/Collaborative process.					
7.) Labor and Management share a common mission and goals					
8.) The IBN/Collaborative process has assisted the AFD in overcoming a top-down, hierarchically driven organizational environment.					
9.) The IBN/Collaborative process has helped to eliminate the “Us vs. Them” attitude in the AFD					
10.) Labor and Management equally share accountability for the results of FLMT decisions/outcomes					
11.) The FLMT as a group is seen as a “leader” in the AFD.					
12.) There is a favorable political and social climate for the IBN/Collaborative process in the AFD.					
13.) The FLMT represents an appropriate cross section of AFD members.					
14.) Use of the FLMT, IBN/Collaborative process is in my best interest.					
15.) Members of FLMT have shown they have the ability to compromise					

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
16.) Labor and Management practice open and frequent communication					
17.) Labor and Management have established informal relationships and communication links					
18.) Labor and Management have shared concrete and obtainable goals and objectives					
19.) Labor and Management have a shared vision					
20.) Collaborative/IBN functions are sufficiently funded.					
21.) The FLMT is a credible, fair, meaningful and open process.					
22.) The IBN/Collaborative process has the commitment and/or involvement of high level, visible leaders (Fire management, City Management, Council)					
23.) The initial mistrust and skepticism of the IBN/Collaborative process diminished over time.					
24.) Labor and Management share a stake in the process of FLMT and the outcome it produces.					
25.) There is a strong leadership of the IBN process rather than of a particular point of view					
26.) The FLMT has celebrated successes along the way, building credibility and momentum.					
27.) The IBN/Collaborative Process has convinced me of the need to focus on the whole organization, not just a particular constituency					
28.) The “leaders” of the AFD (formal and informal) are open to new ideas and are committed to staying the course with Collaboration/IBN					
29.) There is a common understanding and appreciation between Labor and Management of the interdependent nature of the two groups					
30.) The FLMT recognizes individual needs as well as the needs of the whole organization					
31.) The IBN/Collaborative process harnesses the energy of everyone’s imagination and creativity.					
32.) The IBN/Collaborative process provides me with a sense of empowerment					
33.) The FLMT dedicates a sufficient amount of time to the IBN process.					

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
34.) AFD Labor and Management have some history of joint cooperation.					
35.) Use of IBN/Collaboration has increased the honesty between Labor and Management.					
36.) Use of IBN/Collaboration has moved the AFD culture away from conventional management techniques reliant on tradition and legacy.					
37.) Labor and Management have acknowledged and set aside organizational “baggage” that blocks the development of trust					
38.) The IBN process helps to build a highly positive workplace environment					
39.) The IBN/Collaborative process has developed a mutual respect for the abilities and contributions of All members of the AFD.					
40.) The IBN/Collaborative process has developed a belief or trust that Labor and Management will look after my interests					
41.) The IBN/Collaborative process has developed a sense of interdependence, a feeling that your own weaknesses are compensated for by the strengths of another member of the team					

Appendix “A”

I have _____ years of service in the AFD

I currently hold the rank of _____

I am a current or past member of FLMT: Yes _____ No _____

I have received formal training in the IBN Process Yes _____ No _____